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The seal of the United States Department of State, featuring an eagle with a shield, holding an olive branch and arrows, with a constellation of stars above its head. The text "DEPARTMENT OF STATE" is arched above the eagle, and "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" is arched below it.

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 08297 301326Z  
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 08297

E. O. 12356: DECL: 6/30/89

TAGS: PREL, UR, AF

SUBJECT: PRAVDA ARTICLE ON THE IMPROVING SITUATION  
-- INSIDE AFGHANISTAN

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: PRAYDA HAS CARRIED A RARE FEATURE ARTICLE ABOUT THE IMPROVING SITUATION WITHIN AFGHANISTAN WHICH, NEVERTHELESS, DOES NOT DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY IN TONE OR CONTENT FROM SIMILAR ARTICLES WHICH PERIODICALLY APPEAR ELSEWHERE IN THE SOVIET PRESS. PRAYDA MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THERE STILL IS A THREAT TO THE REVOLUTION FROM EXTERNALLY SUPPORTED "BANDIT" GROUPINGS, BUT THAT "PEOPLES' AUTHORITY" IS GROWING AND IN THE END THE DRA WILL TRIUMPH, THANKS IN PART TO CONTINUED SOVIET SUPPORT.

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 08297 301326Z

END SUMMARY.

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3. PRAYDA'S AFGHANISTAN CORRESPONDENT, V. BAIKOV, IN A JUNE 30 ARTICLE, "IN AN UNEASY (RESTLESS) PROVINCE," PAINTS A MIXED, BUT POSITIVE, PICTURE OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AND AROUND JALALABAD. THE ITEM ADMITS THAT THE RESISTANCE IS STRONG IN THE REGION ("SEVERAL THOUSAND BANDITS" ARE ORGANIZED INTO 120 DIFFERENT BANDS) AND MAKES THE USUAL CHARGES ABOUT THEIR BEING TRAINED BY THE U.S. AND OTHERS AT BASES IN PAKISTAN. THE ARTICLE ALSO NOTES THAT THE "DUSHMAN" CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT ATTACKS, BUT SAYS THAT THANKS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES AND ARMY, THE COUNTERREVOLUTION HAS HAD TO RESORT TO OUTRIGHT TERRORIST TACTICS. STILL, ACCORDING TO A LOCAL AFGHAN COMMANDER, THE SITUATION IN THE SECTOR "CONTINUES TO BE SERIOUS," LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE EASE WITH WHICH THE REBEL BANDS CAN CROSS INTO AFGHANISTAN FROM CAMPS IN PAKISTAN.

4. IN ASSESSING TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENTS IN AND AROUND JALALABAD, BAIKOV IS AN OPTIMIST. HE ASSERTS THAT THE "PEOPLES' AUTHORITY" IS GROWING, THE POPULATION IS INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT IN THE DRA AND IS BECOMING ALIENATED FROM THE RESISTANCE. LOCAL VILLAGERS HAVE TAKEN TO FORMING THEIR OWN DEFENSE UNITS. AS A RESULT, ALL BUT THE MOST REMOTE SETTLEMENTS HAVE COME UNDER GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL. THE LOCAL PARTY STRUCTURE IS ALSO IMPROVING. LAST YEAR, BAIKOV ASSERTS, IN THE JALALABAD AREA, THE DPA WELCOMED OVER 1300 NEW FULL AND CANDIDATE MEMBERS INTO ITS RANKS. LAND REFORM IS ALSO MOVING FORWARD AND THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION IS IMPROVING. "GRATIFYINGLY," PEASANTS ARE TAKING A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS BY FORMING WELFARE SOCIETIES AND THE LIKE. IN ADDITION, THE  
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 08297 301326Z

RESISTANCE IS BECOMING DEMORALIZED, A POINT BAIKOV ATTEMPTS TO MAKE BY RECOUNTING AN INTERVIEW WITH A CAPTURED REBEL WHO IS TRYING TO SAVE HIMSELF FROM EXECUTION BY COOPERATING WITH THE AUTHORITIES.

5. THE ITEM CLOSES BY NOTING THAT STILL GREATER EFFORTS WILL BE NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY, BUT, IN THE WORDS OF AN AFGHAN INTERLOCUTOR, "THE AFGHAN PEOPLE FEEL THE SUPPORT OF THEIR TRUE FRIEND, THE SOVIET UNION."

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. COMMENT: A FEATURE ARTICLE OF THIS TYPE IS RELATIVELY RARE ON PRAVDA'S PAGES, BUT FAIRLY ROUTINE IN KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA, OGONEK AND THE LIKE. MOST OF THE THEMES IN THE ARTICLE--LOCAL SELF DEFENSE UNITS, DEMORALIZED REBEL CAPTIVES, IMPROVING EFFICIENCY OF THE DRA ARMY (KZ CARRIED SUCH AN ARTICLE THE SAME DAY)-- ARE STANDARD FARE FOR READERS OF SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON AFGHANISTAN. HENCE, THE ITEM'S MAIN SIGNIFICANCE MAY BE ITS APPEARANCE ON THE HEELS OF THE JUST-CONCLUDED ROUND OF GENEVA TALKS. IF SO, THE MESSAGE SEEMS TO BE THAT WHILE THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO BE UNSTABLE BECAUSE OF OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE, THE DRA'S CONTROL OVER THE PROVINCES IS EXPANDING AND THE PARTY IS GAINING HOLD. THE BOTTOM LINE CONTINUES TO BE THAT, DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES, THE AFGHAN REVOLUTION WILL BE VICTORIOUS AND THE AFGHAN PEOPLE CAN COUNT ON MOSCOW'S CONTINUED BACKING.

. KABUL MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.  
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